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ABSTRACT

This discussion paper illustrates some of the implications of service functions through reference to the historical development of one group of professors of higher education organized within a center, apart from, yet in cooperation with a department of higher education--a group of professors that does provide specific service to the institution in which it is located. (Author)

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"Center for the Study of Higher Education: A Consultant in Residence Role?"

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The Pennsylvania State University Center for the Study of Higher Education was established by trustee action in February, 1969. The first and only director to date assumed his duties on April 1 of the same year. He was made responsible to the provost of the University. He was assigned a lump sum of money within which he was to prepare a budget for the first year's operation. He was to seek outside funding for special projects but the University money was more than ample to maintain a viable Center. These data, particularly as they relate to funding of the Center, have a particular relevance to the roles the Center has played as will be developed later and which are the focus of this paper.

The director immediately on assuming his position began to recruit a staff.* One research associate was appointed on a tenure track basis and another on a temporary appointment. A third person was appointed a half-time staff associate (a more modest appointment than research associate), and a second half-time associate was given a one-year appointment with a specific and somewhat esoteric assignment. The director and the two research associates were given faculty appointments in the College of Education and immediately began advising students, directing the research of doctoral candidates, and teaching one class

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* A decision had been made when the Center was organized to seek persons more interested in policy (e.g., governance) and occupational-professional education than in instruction and student evaluation. A Division of Instructional Services accepts these types of responsibility in the University.

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each term. During the spring of 1969, four graduate students accepted half-time assistantships and one became a full-time assistant as his work for his degree was nearly completed.

Not until July 1, 1973 was the Center fully staffed. There had been one resignation from the Center - the person who was originally appointed on a temporary basis later accepted a permanent appointment and is now a senior administrator in the University. The Center now has six fully professional research associates, all with doctorates (This number includes the director.), four of whom are fully budgeted in the Center and two who have their salaries divided between the Center and the College of Education. All have faculty appointments, two have tenure and four are eligible for tenure. It should be observed that two full-time tenured members of the College carry full-time responsibility for teaching, advising, and pursuing their own scholarly activities in the section for higher education in the College, i.e., they are not on the Center staff.

A preliminary statement of potential Center roles was prepared at the time the Center was authorized. These roles were tested during the Center's first years and have been modestly modified. The Center has always been an "open" organization, free to redirect its efforts within wide boundaries, and minimally organized in bureaucratic terms. It has had responsible yet modest direction and supervision from the central administrative officers to whom the director has been responsible. In other words, the Center has had a high degree of autonomy. The program which has emerged has not been dictated by higher authority (although they have sanctioned it), but has flowed from a professional commitment and obligation on the part of the staff.

After nearly five years of activity the Center can define its current roles as follows: (1) It supports the program in the College as suggested above. All six senior professional staff teach in the program. Currently it carries seven graduate students in higher education who receive stipends and tuition remission. It has partially funded the research projects of some twenty candidates for the doctorate. (2) It carries on studies - bibliographical, literature reviews, analytical and synthesizing, as well as data based, that relate to matters of higher education policy or operation. These studies are designed to have relevance to Penn State University or to higher education in the Commonwealth. However, they are also generally of interest to the higher education community of the nation. These studies are published as "numbered reports" or as monographs. Generally 1,000 copies are "printed." They are distributed, without cost, on a selective basis from a rather extensive mailing list of those who are interested in higher education policy or operation. The lists are heavily weighted to persons at Penn State or in Pennsylvania, but more than one hundred names on the list are of persons in other states or in the District of Columbia. (3) The Center serves the Penn State University community in a role that is perhaps described as "consultants in residence." The Center does not, however, function in terms of a standard institutional research organization. Such an institutional research office does exist in the University as a part of the organization associated with university planning and budgeting.

It is the third role that will be further described in this paper. One of the Center's first efforts was a request from the President of the University to present a variety of designs for a University Senate, as the Senate then in being was being reorganized and its authority modified. The Center responded. Happily, one of the Center staff had done significant research on faculty participation in governance including roles of faculty working in or through Senates. Under the direction of this staff member and with the assistance of two graduate students,

a report was prepared that satisfied the President, that was generally praised and was influential.

Two of the Center staff in its first years gave assistance to the President and his associates in analyzing a draft document of a State Master Plan for Higher Education and preparing papers responsive to it. The prose of one of the staff was embodied in the final published state plan.

In its first years under President Oswald, the University prepared its own Academic Policy Plan. A Commission on Planning and three Task Forces had been designated by the President to be involved in the University planning activity. These operated under a Vice President for Planning. Three Center staff served as consultants to the Commission and the Task Forces. Several background draft papers were prepared by Center staff. Three of the graduate assistants from the Center interviewed faculty and administrators under the supervision of a planning staff associate gathering data relative to planning. Three of the staff were members of a committee of seven that wrote the final report. The contribution of the three was considerable.

During the last several years a variety of activities directly related to University operations have been carried out. A study was made for the graduate school that evaluated an "exceptional admissions" program. An earlier paper prepared by a graduate student on the staff dealt with the University's response to the challenge to enroll and educate disadvantaged students. One staff member prepared three background papers for a University Commission on the Open University. The entire Center staff met with the Committee on academic affairs of the Faculty Senate for an entire morning - reviewing for the Committee current critical issues in higher education with special emphasis on the Carnegie Commission's publications. On another occasion three of the Center staff worked with a Senate

committee that was charged with the responsibility of reviewing and revising general baccalaureate degree requirements. In addition to participation in committee discussion, two background papers were prepared for the committee. Interestingly, each paper has had journal publication.

Two conferences organized by Center staff were conducted in association with the Graduate School. At one, deans of the university and state community college presidents discussed for a day graduate school programs relevant to community college teaching. A second conference brought together deans or directors of the graduate divisions of the State Colleges and deans of university graduate schools. Graduate professional education, and specifically the professional master's degree, was the principal topic of this conference. A more tangential yet important service of the Center is co-sponsorship and support of an annual fall conference concerned with occupational-vocational education in community colleges. The person who organizes this activity is a Professor of Vocational Education.

The Center staff member whose principal interest is governance has given major attention in the last three years to faculty unions and to the processes of collective negotiation or bargaining. Because of his expertness in this area, he was asked by the University Senate to speak to it about faculty unionization, descriptively and analytically. From the spring to fall of 1973, he addressed approximately twenty different college, branch campus or departmental faculty meetings on "Issues in Collective Bargaining." From December 1972 to the present, this staff member has been on a half-time appointment as Special Consultant to the President (of the University, that is) directing the University's planning efforts in preparation for collective bargaining, should it come. This assignment has involved writing background papers, directing institutional research type studies on matters relevant to faculty unionization and preparing contingency plans. This assignment terminates December 31, 1973. It should be

noted that this role has been fulfilled without partisanship. Neither the faculty nor administration can validly assert that this staff member is either "pro or con" relative to unionization.

Another staff member who has expertness in graduate education, in studies of students, and in manpower studies has served as "consultant" to several university committees - graduate and administrative. He worked on the "productivity" problem for the University's Council of Academic Deans. He supervised the work of a graduate student who organized and interpreted data concerning students in the College of Liberal Arts. He made a presentation of the findings to the faculty of this college. He has also been a university representative to statewide councils and committees and to national conferences in these and related fields.

Another member of the Center staff has become particularly useful to the President's office as an outgrowth of his work with certain national organizations and national study groups. This person has been in the midst of the present nationwide discussion over how higher education should be financed in the coming decades. Pennsylvania higher education institutions are attempting to formulate a unified position regarding higher education financing in the Commonwealth, and this person has been a primary staff resource for the development of related documents.

This same individual, again acting in a consultative role, has advised the University's Director of Federal Relations. The tasks this staff member has performed have included the provision of data and the development of position papers concerning alternative methods of higher education finance that might be adopted nationally. While being careful to preserve the scholarly objectivity of the staff member, the University's federal representative has seen to it that the Land-Grant Association, the National Post-Secondary Finance Commission, the

House Committee on Education and Labor, and selected Congressmen among other groups and persons have had the benefits of inputs from this colleague in the Center.

Still another staff member was asked to make a survey and analysis of the programming and administration of an upper division branch campus of the university that was still young and was in the process of continuing program development. This report was prepared with the considerable assistance of the students in a class taught by this staff member. In addition to preparing the report this staff member has met with faculty and administrators of this campus to discuss his findings and recommendations. It is assumed that this report will be basic to planning for the future by this university unit.

A final activity will be noted. The university President expressed concern in the summer of 1972 that the university should subject itself to a thorough program review. The President asked the Center director to prepare a paper that might be the basis for a program review plan, including a process. This was done. Coincident with this activity and correlative to it, the Center director assisted the University Council in preparing a paper that could serve as a base for priority decision making concerning new programs. Plans are now nearing completion for University-wide program review and the process and plan is a refined and modified plan flowing from the original papers prepared by the Center director. Not unrelated, it seemed important that the College of Education, confronted with the task of finding a dean, subject itself to an intensive and comprehensive review of its program, looking forward to a contemporary statement of its mission, a modification of its organization, and a plan for programming in terms of both established and speculative trends. The director of the Center is now serving as Acting Dean of the College and is directing the College's study of itself.

What observations are in order concerning this "consultants in residence" role for the Center, and its staff? The Center has never explicitly reviewed this role. The following observations seem valid. By and large no staff member feels he has been imposed upon. Perhaps ten to twenty-five percent of a Center staff member's time in any given year are spent in such activity as described above. In two instances it has resulted in special assignments that have required one-half to three-fourths of a member's time for a year. In another instance, the service of a Center staff member was not entirely unrelated to his appointment to a senior university administrative position. The service described in this statement has given the Center above average visibility in the University. The quality of the service has generally elicited favorable reactions from university faculty and administrators. The Center believes it has strong support from University administrators including the President and the Provost. Not unrelated to this support is that the staff are reasonably well supplied with secretarial help and a support staff of graduate assistants, a computer and statistical staff assistant, and an editor. In addition, the staff have a flexible schedule, a modest working library, generous professional travel funds, the stimulation of very active professional associates, and of important significance major interaction with colleagues in the various departments and colleges of Penn State. Many of the activities carried out have been professionally interesting and rewarding. Each staff member believes that he has been able to maintain a high degree of professional autonomy even though he may be serving a central administration. Finally, and of fundamental significance, no staff member has felt that his professional and scholarly integrity has been compromised nor has he felt constraints put upon him in expressing professional judgments, even though these judgments may not be shared by his university administrative or faculty colleagues. Academic freedom has been sustained.

Are Professor Anderson's and Professor Duryea's concepts of "service" compatible? On first reading one feels they are quite similar, but after re-reading, subtle differences appear. Both groups (the department and the center) are organized to provide specific "services" in the wider sense, but the notions of "service" are distinctive. Are both definitions applicable to today's institutions? What about those instituttions without the resources or reputation of a Penn State? The Anderson team functions not unlike a group of professional consultants able to assist the local institution, even in major ways, yet feeling itself comfortable in asserting that academic freedom has ". . . been sustained." In some senses, Duryea's faculty member has a less direct relationship to the institution and, to be sure, many professors of higher education find themselves with absolutely no more involvement with the issues confronting the institution than does an individual in any other discipline.

There is, then, the interesting issue of the "contemplative" nature of professors of higher education. How close to the pragmatic realities of institutional life should the professor be? How might such proximity influence the professor's appropriate "service"? Is there an educational leadership role implied in the function of the professorship of higher education?

"Service," what is appropriate and/or our aim? When and how do we leave our academic chambers and apply our skills to institutions of higher education in such a way that our students do not learn merely how to replicate the past, but, indeed, how to create the future?

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